



Mevagissey Male Choir

Raising funds and raising spirits since 1974



www.meva-choir.co.uk
Registered Charity No:298985



Our new musical director? No, it's Baritone Tony Scarratt. To find out what he was up to, see inside.

Summer 2017

No: 32

Our 2017 season is now well under way, with successful concerts at St John's and Holy Trinity, both in St Austell, last month. Reports on both follow. We're now looking forward to our first ever visit to St Swithin's in Launcells, near Bude, on 3rd June, before returning home for our 43rd Mevagissey Feast Week performance, when we'll be joined by the Mevagissey Primary School Choir.

WE STEP BACK INTO THE '60S IN JOINT CONCERT WITH ST MEWAN CHOIR

Over the years, local soprano Alison Harvey has become a great friend of the Choir, notably for her willingness to pitch up and sing with us at the asking. And who hasn't been captivated by her wonderful solo in 'Whispering Hope' on our 'Mevagissey Bay' cd? So, when one of our members suggested performing a joint concert with the St Mewan School Community Choir, we didn't need to think twice.

The St Mewan choir is a mixed adult choir run by Alison at St Mewan Primary School, where she teaches music, and it includes a few familiar faces. It was inspired by Gareth Malone and his TV programmes, and was formed to enable members of the wider community to sing together - a natural addition to the infant, junior and staff choirs which were already well established at the school.



'Whispering Hope' brings the house down again

Now in its seventh year, the Choir, which is directed by Alison, and accompanied by Melanie Farley on piano and David Badger on guitar, now has over 70 regular members who meet once a week and take part in local concerts and charity events, and last year sang at a record number of five weddings!

Alison was so enthusiastic about the idea of a joint concert that she asked if a spot should be found for her school orchestra. Always ready to encourage young talent, we welcomed the idea. St Mewan School is

one of only a few in the county with its own orchestra. In December, they scored high marks in the St Austell Festival of Music and Speech, while some of the older children have previously played in shows at the Hall for Cornwall.

Friday 12 May was the appointed date and St Austell's Holy Trinity church, in the town centre, the venue. Would many come? The answer was a resounding 'yes' – it was so popular that extra chairs had to be brought in at the back of to accommodate everyone.



Alison Harvey introduces the St Mewan School Community Choir

And it's a big church!

First on the risers were the St Mewan choir, with three pieces, *'Circle of Life'*; *'I Believe I Can Fly'*, with soloist Chloe Farley, and *'Hold Back the River'*, soloist Toby Davies.

They filed off to be replaced by our own choir - with just one piece. Yes, just one. But it was the best part of 12 minutes long! It was a first outing for our new *'Back to the '60s'* medley, a compilation comprising *'House of the Rising Sun'*, *'Sealed with a Kiss'*, *'He Ain't Heavy... He's My Brother'*, *'Pretty Flamingo'*, *'Silence is Golden'*, and *'Da Do Ron Ron'*. Seemed to go down well....

MEVAGISSEY MALE CHOIR

As we returned to our seats, the stage was cleared for the children's equipment, a gap filled by compere Bill Collins with a few jokes. Thankfully, their setting up didn't take too long ... sorry, Bill! ..., and we were next treated to four delightful instrumental pieces by the children's orchestra – *'Marching Along'*, *'Chloe's Calypso'*, *'Scarborough Fair'*, and *'Theme from Jurassic Park'*. Such talent, so young!

After a break during which teas and coffees were provided by a number of our Choir ladies in return for donations to a local charity, the St Mewan Choir returned, with four pieces, *'I'll Stand by You'*; *'Sugar in the Hold'*; *'Fix You'*; a debut for the choir, and *'Oh Happy Day'*, soloist Emma Clarke.

The concert concluded with five pieces from the Meva men – *'Anthem' from Chess*, *'Only You'*, *'The Way We Were'* and *'We Rise Again'*. After the first two, Alison stepped up to reprise *'Whispering Hope'*. Hayley Westenra, eat your heart out!

All in all, a wonderful evening that was over far too quickly.

Thanks go to the Holy Trinity, for accommodating us. Also to Bill Collins for his professional compering, and to the ladies who provided the teas and managed the door.



St Mewan Primary Schoolchildren Tune Up!



Who says we don't smile enough?



Three of our young tea ladies – Jane, Les and Jo – the fourth, Carolyn, is taking the photo!



A relaxed Matt Fox catches our photographer's eye!

Mevagissey Welcomes the World



The Gentlemen Singers – is this what they mean by singing a round?

For our first concert of 2017 we were joined by choirs from Australia, the Czech Republic and Wales. Yes, the International Festival of Male Choirs was under way again. It seemed hardly any time at all since we trooped up to St John's in St Austell for the previous festival – but that was in 2014!

Over five days of the Bank holiday weekend, almost 60 choirs performed at 50 events in 40 venues throughout Cornwall. Besides our own guests, there were choirs from Finland, Germany, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the USA, as well as from all over the UK.

As usual, Mevagissey had elected not to take part in the competition, but we were delighted once again to act as one of the Federation's host choirs. We were grateful in particular to Second Tenors Terry Coplin and Des Honey who, along with other MMC members, put in a lot of effort as part of the Festival team.

Our moment came on Saturday 29th April when we found ourselves following a technically brilliant Czech group on to the risers. The Gentlemen Singers, from Hradec Králové, are the only professional male octet in the Czech Republic. A little too esoteric for some, perhaps, but they impressed the audience with their pitch and control. And they did close with a Lennon & McCartney number – 'All You Need is Love'. But our own set, comprising 'Nessun Dorma'; 'The Way We Were'; 'Every Time I Feel the Spirit'; 'Home Lovin' Man'; 'Only You'; and 'We Rise Again', didn't disappoint.

After the break, the audience were entertained by the South Wales Gay Men's Chorus from Cardiff, who opened with 'The Sweetest Kick in the Heart' and followed it with 'There is Nothing Like a Dame'! Last on were the Melbourne Welsh Male Choir, who claim to have been inspired by the Morrision Orpheus Choir, and were on their third visit to the UK. Their repertoire comprised 'Stout Hearted Men; the familiar 'Ride the Chariot'; 'Always on my Mind'; and 'Men of La Mancha'.



BBC Radio's Naomi Kennedy with the South Wales Gay Men's Chorus

The evening was professionally compered by Naomi Kennedy, presenter on BBC Radio Cornwall, and pictured here with the South Wales Men's Chorus.

At the end of the performance, everyone was invited back to the nearby White Hart for what proved to be an excellent afterglow, and our thanks here should go to St Austell Brewery for their generosity in providing pasties for all the singers.

Entertaining the Entertainers!

When those 16 or so Mevagissey stalwarts formed our Choir back in 1974, they all lived in the village, or very close by, and brought with them an irreplaceable sense of community. Today our members hail from as far as Truro, Fowey and Bude, so the bond between members might be thought to be not as strong as it once was.

If that was the perception, it would have been changed last October, when 70 of us spent a week together in Cyprus. We all - members, wives, partners and friends - enjoyed other's company so much that we decided we should do it more often.

We can't travel to Cyprus on a regular basis, but was there any reason why we couldn't recreate the atmosphere here at home? We thought we'd give it a try and booked Mevagissey Social Club for 'A Night of Self Entertainment' on Friday 7th April. It couldn't have worked better. It was a wonderful night, thoroughly enjoyed by all 80 or so who attended.

We started with a team quiz, brilliantly organised and conducted by Andy Gill, following which we had a half hour break in which to make some inroads into the mountain of food that members had kindly brought along. Then the fun started.

Peter Bowker, who'd done so much to get the show on, and George Phillips got us under way, setting the tone – and the bar – suitably low with 'Dirty Old Town', sung by Peter and accompanied by George Phillips on harmonica and himself on



Peter & Gordon (sorry, George) – the oldest swingers in town



New Bass Paul Uzzell has sure got some brass!

guitar.

Next to step up was Roger Mitchell, who regaled us with his poetic tale of *'Pete the Piddling Pup'*. He was replaced by a brass band! New Bass Paul Uzzell, wife Jacqui and Mike S Thompson staggered on with trumpet, trombone and French horn (we think!) to perform a couple of pieces. Mike Tate followed, delivering the Stanley Holloway monologue, *'Brahm Boots'*.

One of the biggest roars of the evening came when Christine Thompson, May Phillips, Jo Scarratt and Lesley Nicholls

skipped on [*skipped on? Are you sure? – ed*] to sing *'Nobody Loves a Fairy When*

She's 40'. Next, Emma and Hayley White, ever-presents at our concerts with their Mum, Lyn, came on with two friends to delight us with some beautiful harmonies.

Edith Piaf (sorry, Rosey Murphy) then gave us *'La Vie en Rose'* before being joined by husband Robin for a blast of Rhythm and Blues. George Phillips returned with *Talking Choir Blues* and then invited wife Mary up for a delightful love song (sorry, can't remember the name). Next came The Press Gang, a shanty group that some of the choir members belong to, performed a couple of numbers from their repertoire. One of their complement, Graham Hoskins, stayed on to play a Shadows medley – and then it was back to Bowker, for *'We're off to see the Wild West Show'* – to his own piano accompaniment.

Finally, it was time for the star of the show, *The Great Vaselini*, introduced by Tony Scarratt, and played by that great Friend of the Choir, Alan Thwaites. Time and space does not permit us to do the act justice – so we won't try. We closed the evening with a combined rendering of *'Cornwall my Home'*.

It was a fabulous evening, and



Our own Fairy Ring



great credit goes to everyone who performed, brought food and prizes, and attended. Special thanks should go to Peter Bowker for his organisation, assisted by Simon Lawday, and compering, to Andy Gill for the quiz, to Press Gang for the loan of their sound equipment; to Graham Hoskins for setting it all up.

Now people are asking, when's the next one?

Emma & Hayley White with two friends -can we have bigger fans?

Rosey & Robin rockin' 'n' rollin'



The moment we'd all been waiting for – The Great Vaselini appears.

JIMMER JOINS – WHAT KEPT HIM?



Jimmer takes a break at Sennen Cove

Could new Top Tenor Dave Smith have better credentials for membership of our Choir? Well, yes, he could have been born in Mevagissey. Then, he would surely have been the perfect prototype. In his own words, he is “a proud Cornishman, born and bred in St Blazey Gate”, and he attended schools at Biscovey, Truro Cathedral, and Fowey. His mother’s family all came from Mevagissey - Bank Terrace – and his grandfather, George Allen, fished out of Mevagissey. While two of his cousins – Rodney and the late Stuart Ingram - have sung with our Choir. Dave even married into music. Wife Kathryn, who he married in Ludgvan Church near Penzance, was an organist at Germoe Church near Penzance for 40 years, and sang with Penzance Choral Society for 20 years.

Better yet, he’s is an experienced chorister himself, having sung with E.C.C. Engineering Department Male Voice Choir for over 25 years. So, when that choir folded, what was he to do? It was no-brainer.

“Being a local boy, I have known several members of Meva Choir for years, many of whom have been encouraging me to join. It seemed a natural progression,” he says.

Dave, or Jimmer, as he is often called, is now 18 months into his retirement as an engineer, having spent most of his working life at English China Clays. On leaving full-time education, he was awarded an Indentured Engineering Apprenticeship with The Standard Triumph Motor Company, spending his first year in London, before transferring to Coventry for another four years to complete his training.

After a spell with the family business, he was hired by ECC, where he spent 30 years, eventually becoming their Lead Planning Engineer. He left to take up the role of Engineering Liaison Officer with Cornwall College Business, where he spent the final eight years of his career.

When he’s not singing, Jimmer indulges his passion for cars, gardening and golf – he’s been a member of St Austell Golf Club for over 30 years (he doesn’t mention any medals!). When he was younger, he completely rebuilt a Triumph Spitfire which he ran for several years.

He took the bull by the horns for his voice test and tackled *'Back to the '60s'*, a piece we had yet to sing out! "This was primarily because it was the piece that we had been practising most since I joined the choir", he reveals. Canny, these Cornishmen!

Several of the pieces that we sing are very familiar, he says - although not all necessarily have the same arrangement. "I am very impressed with the range of pieces that are in the repertoire, a mix of new and good traditional music."

Jimmer, who has a son in Warwick, a daughter near Polmassick, and three grandchildren, says he's now "looking forward to the camaraderie that singing in a choir can bring. Kathryn and I have attended a few trips away with the choir, and also some of the social events, and we've found the members of the choir and their wives most welcoming."

Dave is already proving a valued and popular member of the Choir – but where did 'Jimmer' come from? "Too long a story", he says.

Ridler Returns!

What a great sight it was a couple of months back to see Ian Ridler sat among the Second Tenors. It's four years since Ian and his wife Anna decided to downsize and moved to Calstock. "But we missed Mevagissey, the people, the choir, and the general area, so here we are again!!" says Ian. "We're both working part time at the Lost Gardens of Heligan and we're very happy – even if our house currently looks like the Gaza Strip on a bad day!"

Ian began life in Colwall, a village in the shadow of the Malvern Hills, and left home to join the Royal Navy in the '70s. He was a Petty Officer (Communications) and diver, serving on Leander Class Frigates and County Class destroyers "as well as the odd job on subs!" When he left, he joined the West Mercia Police, becoming a firearms specialist and advanced driver trainer in Worcester. He is also a qualified Rugby Union referee and a former Navy and Police player. "When asked what position I used to play, my two sons, both rugby players, would respond with 'draw back'!!

Ian, Anna and the boys first came to Mevagissey in 2005. He worked as a gardener but before long he found himself skippering the Mevagissey/Fowey ferry! "I had to jump through and over many hoops and hurdles to acquire my National Boatmasters' Licence, and the plethora of other qualifications required," he says. But it was evidently worth it. He loved the job and, for the next six years, delighted in observing the variety of wildlife around the coast – "dolphins, basking sharks, sunfish, the occasional whale and the ubiquitous gannets – such a thrill to see them dive for fish."

So how did he get into choirs? "I've always loved the sound of male choirs and, in 1998, he was invited along to a practice with Hereford Male Choir. "I stood amongst some 60 or so singers totally in awe. Before long I was doing the mandatory voice test as a second tenor and I've never looked back. Totally hooked!!"

"It's good to be back", he says. "I have been made to feel so welcome by so many in the choir - although I have some catching up (homework!!) to do before I go public, so to speak."

Friends of MMC say

*I am so sorry I was not in Cyprus to see you!!! PLEASE let me know if you have any plans to travel anywhere else although of course, you cannot really find a more beautiful setting than Mevagissey and the other harbours in Cornwall!!!! Thank you for the latest newsletter and please keep me posted! I can honestly say that every evening I listen to your CD and I never tire of it! - **Sally Adams, north London***

*I'm not long back from the Cornwall Male Voice Festival in which our choir took part. This was our third visit and, while we don't take part in the competitions, we have always had a wonderful time. Although we have never sung with Mevagissey, I did pick up a copy of your "Down the Years" CD and have just been listening to it. Wonderful sound and every word as clear as a bell. What a superb souvenir of another wonderful Festival visit! As I said, we have never been together, but - who knows? - maybe next time - **Eric Hudson, President, Westerton MVC, Glasgow***

*Love hearing from the choir! We will be in Cornwall again next year and hope to at least come to a practice session! - **David and Norma Reece, Opotiki, New Zealand***

*I miss my beloved Cornwall and so much wish I could attend some of your concerts, but in the meantime, the CDs give me great enjoyment. My every good wish to continued success off the wonderful Mevagissey Male Choir – **Bernice Legg, Bridgwater, Somerset***

*Thanks to the choir members for the terrific welcome and a very special evening on Monday. It was all totally unplanned but very often it's the spontaneous that turns out the best. We have had a great couple of days in Mevagissey and look forward to returning in the not too distant future, hopefully on a Monday, so that we can inflict our company on you once again. - **Sue and John Bonnett***

*Sadly, we shall miss the Social Evening and the International Competition on the 29th. However, we hope we'll meet up on Monday 24th in The Fountain. A donation will find its way by direct transfer as usual, and we look forward very much to seeing you again in April - **Douglas & Jane, Surrey***

*We are here in Mevagissey celebrating our Golden Wedding Anniversary. Walking around the harbourside, we saw the invitation to come and listen to your weekly rehearsal. Well what a lovely surprise, we had no idea what to expect, we thoroughly enjoyed the ensemble as most of the songs were in the era we grew up in. We will be going home soon but your rehearsal was a lovely end to our stay in Mevagissey, as was the welcome from many choir members. we wish you well in all the events in which you will be taking part. **Gill & Graham McLeod, Bristol***

PLEASE DONATE!

The proceeds from almost all our concerts go to charities and good causes, so we rely on our August quay concerts, our CD sales, and our members' own annual subscriptions to generate the funds we need to buy our music and fund our other expenses. And on YOU! Please give generously to ensure the continuing prosperity of our Choir. Please make your cheque out to Mevagissey Male Choir and send to Mike Tate, Hillside House, Biscovey Road, Par, PL24 2HW.

THANKS

Thanks once again to all those who supplied photos, particularly Carolyn George, who does a sterling job at our concerts. Many more of the photos she takes can be seen on the website www.meva-choir.co.uk. Do check out the website – it really is the best place to keep up to date with choir activities and much more, thanks to Mike Thompson's excellent work.

2017 DIARY

Date	Comment	Venue	Time
Sat 27 May	Blessing of the Fleet	Fish Quay, Mevagissey	3.00pm
Sat 3 Jun		St Swithin's, Lancell	7.30pm
Mon 26 Jun	Feast Week Concert	St Andrew's, Mevagissey	7.30pm
Sat 8 Jul	Cancer Research	St Bartholemew, Yealmpton	7.30pm
Mon 17 Jul	Stithians Show	Stithians Show Ground	tbc
Sat 22 Jul	Members' and Friends' Barbecue	Barley Sheaf, Gorran	7.00pm
Mon 31 Jul	Quay Concert	Mevagissey Quay	7.45pm
Mons 7, 14, 21, 28 Aug	Quay Concert	Mevagissey Quay	7.45pm
Sun 8 Oct		Holsworthy Arts Theatre	2.00pm
Sun 15 Oct	Harvest of the Sea	St Andrew's, Mevagissey	4.00pm
Sat 21 Oct	With Mousehole MVC	St Andrew's, Mevagissey	7.30pm
**Thu 30 Nov	AGM	Mevagissey Social Club	7.30pm
Sat 9 Dec	Christmas, with Ladies and School	St Andrew's, Mevagissey	7.00pm
Tue 12 Dec	Informal Christmas Singalong	St John's, St Austell	7.30pm
<i>Fri 15 Dec</i>	<i>Christmas concert</i>	<i>Holy Trinity, St Austell</i>	<i>7.30pm</i>
**Mon 18 Dec	Christmas concert	Penrice House	7.30pm

2018

Sat 13 Jan	Dinner/Dance	Carlyon Bay Golf Club	7.30pm
Sat 5 May	<i>With Cyprus Ladies</i>	Minack Theatre	7.30pm

** = private

Italics = provisional